

Atlantic City, NJ – Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) was featured at the United Steelworkers (USW) Legislative Conference Sunday, and used the opportunity to address the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) and speak about other important legislation benefiting workers and their families. About 300 individuals attended the event at the Taj Mahal Casino, where EFCA was at the forefront of the agenda. — “I believe one must look at the facts on any issue,” said Congressman Sestak. “In a study by President Bush's National Labor Relations Board in 2007, 32 percent of the time that workers tried to unionize, workers were fired against the law, and 40 percent of the time, even after an election was won, a contract was never signed with the employees. I am, therefore, a cosponsor of EFCA because unfair labor practices are being done in places in America. I would support a compromise that addresses labor's concerns, and which they support, because good governance is important.”

The bill calls for amending the National Labor Relations Act to “establish an efficient system to enable employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to provide for mandatory injunctions for unfair labor practices during organizing efforts, and for other purposes.” USW, which includes more than a million active and retired members and represents the metallurgy, manufacturing, chemical and pharmaceutical industries, is North America's largest private sector union and an outspoken advocate of EFCA.

In addition to his support of EFCA, the Congressman discussed other necessary steps to ensure fair wages, improve workplace conditions and address rising unemployment as part of his efforts on behalf of working families. For instance, to increase workers' rights, he cosponsored the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act, which would permit state and local public safety workers to join a union, have their union recognized by their employer and bargain collectively over hours, wages and terms and conditions of employment.

Earlier this month, he voted in favor of the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act, a bill that he co-sponsored to provide four weeks of paid parental leave for both male and female federal employees. Its provisions emphasize that men and women are treated equally and the legislation is especially important, in part, because government-sponsored day care facilities usually do not care for infants younger than 10 to 12 weeks old.

To further promote gender equity, the Congressman helped pass the Paycheck Fairness Act and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, both of which he co-sponsored. The first places the burden of proof on employers for cases in which a gender pay disparity exists and protects employees who share information about wages. The second makes clear that every paycheck resulting

from an earlier discriminatory pay decision is considered a violation of the Civil Rights Act, meaning that as long as workers file within 180 days of a discriminatory paycheck, their charges are considered as timely.

Highlighting the need to make workplace safety a priority, Congressman Sestak has stressed the need to build on efforts he has strongly supported to improve conditions, including:

- The Combustible Dust Explosion and Fire Prevention Act of 2008, which directs the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an interim final Combustible Dust standard. The standard would minimize hazards associated with combustible dust through improved housekeeping, engineering controls, worker training and a written combustible dust safety program; and
- The Popcorn Workers Lung Disease Act, which mandates that OSHA issue a standard within 90 days to minimize workers' exposure to diacetyl in popcorn and flavorings manufacturing plants; requires employers to develop a written exposure control plan that would use engineering controls and respirators to protect workers, and to conduct medical monitoring to determine whether workers' health continued to be harmed.

The Congressman has also emphasized the significance of steps taken to deal with unemployment during difficult economic times. He has backed the temporary suspension of federal income tax on the first \$2,400 of unemployment benefits per recipient, and the extension through December 2009 of the unemployment benefits program, which provides up to 33 weeks of extended benefits, helps millions of jobless workers and takes advantage of the finding by Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody's Economy.com, that every dollar in unemployment benefits creates at least \$1.63 in economic activity.

"Labor plays a crucial role in defending and strengthening the middle class that is core of the American economy," said Congressman Sestak. "I am proud of what we have been able to achieve to support the American worker, and I look forward to the continued work ahead."

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group

of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.